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ABSTRACT

Specialized services needed in the Leflore County School System in rural Mississippi are discussed in this 1969 document prepared under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The services considered do not include administrative or supervisory services or formally organized classroom instruction for regular and non-clinical slow-learning pupils. The special services are needed, and recommendations are cited for them, in the areas of (1) guidance, (2) social work, (3) health, (4) psychology and psychiatry, (5) special education, and (6) research and evaluation. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (AN)

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Leflore County School District
Mississippi

Reports of Consultants and Advisory Specialists under Planning Grant, Title III, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

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Volume XII

Special Services

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the people of the area, and the nutritional and health conditions in many homes make the rendering of services that are not academic in nature pre-requisite to the effective operation of instructional programs, per se. Furthermore, these same conditions make types of instructional programs, which in turn will require special, and specialized services for their effective operation. This will be true particularly in the area of research and evaluation. Therefore this consultant urges that the timing of the addition of special services be given continuous and careful consideration, and suggests that some should be instituted prior to formal instructional changes, others concurrent with such changes, and doubts any should be delayed unitl instructional improvement has been effected.

Certain of the recommendations which follow may appear to be for services which would duplicate those offered by other agencies of the Federal, State or local governments. This consultant is both aware and appreciative of such non-school related services. The testimony of the responsible educators in Leflore County is to the effect that services in certain areas are theoretically, but not actually, available, and in other areas are inadequate to meet the cultural needs of school children, their younger siblings and parents. On the basis of his experience and responsibility for administering educational programs in poverty stricken areas, this consultant believes that many of the needs in the fields of health, nutrition, social work and counseling can be met best when there are professional personnel attached to the schools who can supplement the services rendered by their counterparts in the several non-school community agencies. The benefits are reciprocal, and the net results is better service to deserving clients. In effect, the arrangement permits the information about children and their families which the school is in a unique position to obtain to be

pooled with the information which non-school agencies are in a unique position to obtain, and the use of the pooled information in devising assistance programs for the families concerned.

The recommendations which follow will logically require the addition of personnel in areas in which fully trained personnel are in very short supply, nationally; and not realistically obtainable in sufficient numbers by this school system. This consultant recommends that the system budget for one top-level position in each area and that the top-level position be filled with a mature professional person, one of whose principal duties will be the training of his staff. Given such a person in each field, the school can identify local teachers who may have some formal training, who are interested, and who are capable of learning new skills and disciplines and start them to work under the leadership of the professional person in the area.

The colleges and universities of the State of Mississippi can contribute to the professional development of the staff of each area. It is simply unrealistic to expect these institutions to produce a sufficient number of such people from their own student bodies to meet the needs. This school system can be greatly benefitted by seim-professionals, or quasi-professionals, working as they learn under competant leadership. The fact that 100% of the teachers of the system hold a bachelor's or higher degrees does give the system a pool of persons having some basic training for the work in most of the areas.

The most effective administrative plan for the development and operation of the service covered in this report merits careful consideration. The common characteristic of the services to be rendered is that none is regularly organized systematic instruction and none is system-wide or local

school administration. This sets the special services apart. A second characteristic is that to be most effective, they must be mutually support-' ive and all must support and supplement the instructional work of the teachers. Put in another way, the effectiveness of the services will be decreased if the several services become splinter operations or if any or all operate as ends in themselves. The third characteristic is that the personnel will have been trained in disciplines which have some common ties which should be maintained and strengthened on the job. Public health medical practice, nursing, social work, family counseling and social research are cases in point. These considerations lead this consultant to recommend that the Superintendent and School Board consider carefully the advisability of establishing the services under consideration as a division of the school program, directed by a competent administrator, given a budget, and having defined responsibilites for the recruitment, training and productivity of its personnel.

2. Special Programs.

A. Guidance.

Under the general heading of guidance, two target populations may be identified. These are children of all ages in school, and young adults and parents who are not formally in school. Two broad types of services should be rendered to both populations. These are personal, group, and educational counseling, and vocational counseling.

Basically, the Leflore County School System must help many of its children in school to make a great cultural transition. Guidance personnel who can listen, and talk with such children about themselves, their peers, their parents, their teachers, the world about them, and their opportunities are critically needed. Furthermore, each school should have enough counselors

to serve children without long delays and with time for feedback to teachers and other service personnel. A lot of guidance will be needed to transpose children from what may be described as a "fossil culture" to twentieth century America! Of course, Leflore County Schools do enroll children of twentieth century American culture who, too, need guidance in the normal process of growing up. Such children, often gifted and usually economically and socially fortunate, must not be neglected. It is conceivable that these children need help to understand and appreciate their classmates from the less fortunate social strata.

Equally basically, out of school youth and parents need counselors, and friends to whom they can turn if they are to move forward themselves, or at least not to block the progress of the children in school. Because of the social role of the school, it is the agency that is best able to operate an "out-client" counseling service. The school can both help and be helped by rendering such services.

The meaning of personal, group and educational counseling has been well covered in the professional literature of the field. This consultant wishes only to observe that for many of the children to be served the problems to be dealt with will be basic, elemental, and hard. Their counselors will need to possess mature personalities, common sense, and a sympathetic understanding of their counselees. They also need the best technical preparation obtainable to enable them to refer clients for the proper specialized social, psychological and medical assistance and to work effectively with their colleagues in these areas.

Vocational counseling in the Leflore County schools has a special significance. The area is undergoing a rapid transition in which field labor as commonly understood has practically ceased to exist. Mechanized and highly specialized farm work and industrial and service occupations are not comprehended by those who have been displaced. Children and young adults need to

They also need to acquire patterns of personal and social values, and conduct which will enable them to obtain new kinds of jobs, to perform well on the job, and to maintain continuous employment. Vocational counseling for many in this community includes much that is not normally required in urbanized communities. The client-counselor ratio should be relatively small to permit counselors to develop basic patterns of values and conduct as well as to impart the normal information.

This consultant recommends that guidance personnel be added to the staff as rapidly as reasonably competent personnel can be employed and/or trained and adequate physical facilities can be provided in each school. The optimum ratio of counselors to clients can only be determined as the program develops.

B. Social Work.

This area is generally designated school social work because of its primary orientation to the social problems of children and their families that impringe upon the successful attainment of an education by the children.

The school social worker is a professional colleague of social workers in the several community agencies and an interpreter of those agency functions to parents who need their services. In this role, she increases the effectiveness of the non-school social agencies . The school social worker is an interpreter of home conditions to teachers and of the school to parents. She helps teachers understand the realities with which certain children must cope, thus aiding them to plan for and work with children who are often the teacher's most serious problems. Equally often, she helps parents understand what the school is trying to do for the children, the problems their children

may be having in coping with the school, and suggests ways in which the parents may help both. The school social worker supplies the knowledge of personal and social conditions in individual homes and segments of the community to the service personnel in the fields and health, psychological services, and guidance and thus augments their effectiveness.

School social workers fulfill a great need in the Leflore County schools in rendering the services specified above. On the basis of the testimony given by Leflore County School personnel, this consultant concludes that school social workers in addition to the two able people now serving in this capacity are needed to more effectively procure food, clothing, and medical services for families in cultural and economic need. Reasonably competent school social workers can and do detect such needs and know or will learn where and how to turn to get the food and clothing needed to relieve suffering and medical attention for the ill. Such workers can and do spot unsatisfactory hygienic conditions and work with nurses and hygienists in teaching better practices and alleviating hazards.

As soon as it can possibly be funded and as rapidly as personnel can be employed and/or trained, the program of school social work should be further developed and expanded in the Leflore County schools.

C. Health Services.

School health services should include competent in-school nursing services, adequate and readily obtainable public health medical services, dental services, and health instruction.

Every school should have a competent nurse, or nurses, in-house, to care for children who come to school ill, or become ill while in school, and to give informal, personal, and group instruction in health and hygiene. The nursing staff should cultivate good relations with the local physicans

and dentists in private practice and in public practice to assure that individual children can get medical and dental attention when they need it. The nursing staff should also work with the physicans and dentists in private and public practice to develop and conduct group programs for immunization and the prevention of illness and dental problems.

The addition of nurses in-school will add man-power in a sector of community welfare that is chronically under-staffed. Equally importantly, nurses working from the vantage point of the school have access to knowledge which non-school members of the health professions rarely if ever obtain. Furthermore, active and competent school nurses are powerful influences in obtaining more adequate health services, and more medical and dental personnel in both private and public practice in the community.

In-school nurses are highly effective instructors in the area of health and hygiene. The "advice" they give individual patients is essentially instruction given pointedly and at the most opportune time. There are topics which can be presented to groups of boys, or of girls, or in mixed groups by a nurse in uniform which would arouse the sensitivity or the resentment of the same students, and perhaps of their parents, if presented by a teacher. Consequently, the school nurses should be responsible for group health instruction as needed, but not burdened by regular instructional assignments.

This consultant recommends that the Leflore County schools obtain school nurses as quickly as possible. He suggests that they may secure assistance from the Mississippi Department of Public Health and from the American Red Cross. It seems not to be generally known that the American Red Cross has worked with schools and assigned their nurses to communities which qualify on the basis of need. The school or other

community agency normally contributes to the cost of such service, but the community gets more than full value for its contribution.

Additional physicians and dentists in public practice and in private practice are needed. The school should explore every avenue to obtain additional professional personnel in the community and to establish programs which will make the rendering of their services more efficient. Physicians and dentists whose practice is wholly or primarily in the schools should be the goal.

D. Psychological and Psychiatric Services.

These services lie within a broad area in which the fields of practice and the roles of the several kinds of practitioners have not been delineated with a high degree of unaminity. School psychological and psychiatric services are in their formative stages. Therefore this consultant recommends that the Leflore County school system seek the advice of other consultants, weigh carefully the several kinds of advice they will doubtless obtain, and then devise a program which seems best to meet the needs of their local system. The following comments and observations for the consideration of the Leflore County school system are offered:

Psychiatric services are those rendered by persons having a basic medical education plus specialized preparation in the treatment of mental and emotional disorders. There are a limited number of psychiatrists and they practice in mental hospitals or public or private clinics. It would be most unusual for one to be available for practice within a school system of the size of Leflore County. The most practical arrangement would be one through which this school could obtain such services through a State mental hospital or clinic. The school probably could profit by reviewing its referral arrangements and making such modifications as may be necessary to expedite the care of its most critical cases. The development of related

psychological services to the point where they could serve out-patient cases might reduce the load on the relatively few psychiatrists and thus maximize the benefits they could render to the most serious cases. This possibly should be explored.

Psychological services include those of a clinical nature dealing with individual cases of mental or emotional disturbance, or mental deficiency or disorder, and those directed to the less serious and perhaps more general problems of individual and social adjustment, broadly defined. The writer suggests that within the typical school there are three roles often played by psychologists. Differentiating these roles fairly clearly, but not separating them completely, and staffing accordingly, might well improve the efficiency of school psychological services.

The first role considered is that of the psychometrist. The competent administration of individual psychological tests is a necessary and time comsuming task. In most instances the clinical or more general psychologist does not need to administer such tests himself, but he does need valid and reliable results of such testing. The writer has observed school programs of psychological services that involve highly competent psychologists in test administration and record keeping to such an extent that there is no time left for treatment. The best expenditure of funds and use of man-power would be effected in such situations by the employment of a staff of competent psychometrists who should work under the direction of professional psychologists. Competent clerical assistance should be provided the psychometrists.

The second role is that of the quite general psychologist. He should be general in the sense that he is conversant with learning theorty and able to counsel meaningfully with teachers about problems of slow learners and with children who are such cases; general in the sense that he is con-

versant with the theory of personality development and personal adjustment and able to work their teachers; general in the sense that he is conversant with the theory of social behavior and can work constructively with children and teachers to prevent or to alleviate social conflict by building understandings and constructive attitudes; the clinician on the one hand and with teachers and parents on the other. Psychologists who can function in this role are needed in most schools and especially in the Leflore County schools which enroll children from the extremes of the social and cultural continuum. One such could be well used in every school of this county and probably more will be needed in the larger schools.

A psychologist having the above competencies would effectively extend the counseling services beyond those which the typical counselor is qualified to render. From time to time he should conduct group instruction and less formal seminars in mental health and social dynamics for children. Companion courses or sessions for teachers should be scheduled as needed in a more general in-service training program.

The third role is that of the clinical psychologist. Given the services of psychometrists and the services of the general psychologists as described above, clinical psychologists should be freed to devote their attention to cases who are enrolled in schools but who need the clinician's care. The availability of clinicians who are free to give therapy should meet the all to common complaint that such attention to individuals in inordinately delayed in schools.

The clinical psychologist should be the referring agent to psychiatrists and be principally responsible for the "out-patient" cases descrebed above. It seems possible that he should be able to supervise psuchiatric patients during the often prolonged period before complete recovery.

The clinical psychologist should also work closely with those special education teachers responsible for the educable emotionally disturbed and/or brain damaged children.

The writer is aware of the fact that the above analysis of the service area and suggested division of labor is not wholly in accord with the views of many psychologists. While he would not urge his particular point of view, he would observe that psychological services are so desperately needed that some divisions of labor and patterns of cooperation among the professionals in this area must be devised to make their work in schools more efficient.

E. Special Education.

Special education as used in this report includes programs of instruction offered to those children who because of physical or mental impairment, or emotional disturbance, must be removed from regularly organized classes for part or all of the school day. It does not include programs for otherwise normal children who are simply learning slowly, or programs for the gifted, or for those seeking priveleged instructional opportunities.

Special education is included as a special service area rather than a regular instructional area because these teachers typically have specialized training in physical therapy, clinical psychology, visual, auditory or speech defects, etc. , and because they need the close support of each of the special areas previously discussed. As teachers, they should be able to establish and maintain lines of communication with the regular classroom teachers who may have their children part of the day or receive their children if and when the children return to the regular classroom.

The Leflore County schools should survery their need for special education offerings and provide facilities as close as possible to the homes or the schools which the children would normally attend. Competent instructors having

specialized training related to one or more types of defects should be provided as needed, and as rapidly as they can be employed. Special education is necessarily expensive on a per pupil basis; but the arguments, both financial and moral, are overwhelmingly in its favor. Support can usually be obtained from non-local tax sources for good or promising programs.

F. Research and Evaluation.

The provision for research and evaluation services is essential to the development of new programs of instruction, the operation of the previously discussed special services, and the future administration of the school system. It is a basic tool of good administrative management for each program and for the system as a whole. Research and appropriate evaluation are basic requirements in practically all programs supported by external funding agencies. The role of research and evaluation can be best understood by considering illustrations drawn from each area.

Regularly organized classroom instruction is the central activity of the school. To further this activity, new materials, new methods and new programs will be proposed. At the time each innovation is considered, plans for its evaluation should be entertained. Typically, initial consideration is in terms of global, if not nebulous objectives. The competent research or evaluation person will help those planning instructional programs to state their objectives in definite, observable terms that have a reasonable probability of being attained. This assistance is invaluable in further planning because it gives focus to the efforts. Having the objectives clearly stated gives point to the teaching and the learning on the part of the pupils. A well developed plan for research and for the evaluation of the program furnishes at one and the same time a good guarantee of its success and the means of determining the degree to which it was successful, with whom it was successful, and under what conditions. Likewise the

same information is given about its weaknesses. Both types of information are needed for future adoption, modification, or rejection of the program.

The research and evaluation program includes studies of both the process and the products of instruction. Since these are mutually dependent, each should be studied to improve the other. For this reason a program for testing achievement alone cannot be as informative as a program that includes analyses of the processes by which the achievement, or lack thereof, as attained.

The characteristics of the pupils, cognatively and affectively, enter into the teaching and learning process. Research that brings to light the individual and group characteristics of pupils promotes effective teaching and learning.

The ability to translate reported research and to interpret reported evaluations of programs in other systems supplies a rich fund of ideas to any school and speeds the improvement of its program. Often the perceptive analysis of such reports proves to be the best protection against wasting time on useless fads, or impractical or inappropriate programs.

Each of the special service programs suggested above requires extensive, technical, and systematic data for its effective operation. The school's ability to furnish such data is a function of the strength of its research and evaluation service. In most schools, the need for valid and reliable pupil data is best understood in the field of guidance. The more technical field of psychological services makes even more stringent demands. Every service needs the benefit of careful evaluations of its processes and its products as guides to future change.

Good administrative practice dictates that reports of the several program and service area evaluations be considered in allocating funds, personnel,

and other resources. This will enhance the probability that resources will go where they are needed and that non-productive efforts will be eliminated.

Good research and evaluation furnishes the basic data needed for reporting to the community. Factual reporting of the general status of the school and its areas of strengths and weaknesses builds confidence and community support. Good, hard facts about the community's school build the community's faith in their school and further support of it.

A good research and evaluation service requires competent personnel, physical facilities and data processing equipment. Realistically, the personnel are in short supply. This certainly is an area where one or two competent persons will most likely have to train their staff as they work. The university system can assist and it's cooperation should be obtained.

The physical facilities required are not highly specialized. They should be centrally located and easily reached from every school, as roomy as possible, and separate from other activities. Some special wiring and good climate control will be required.

Data processing facilities are essential. Facilities in this case included hardware and softward-machines, competent operators, and programs and programming capability. Each local unit needs some basic machines such as a test-scoring machine, key punches and verifiers, and a sorter with printing capability. Shared time on a computer will generally meet the needs of a local school. It should be possible for the equipment to be used in training programs in vocational courses or schools and thus get added benefits from it. By using the equipment for routine record keeping and administrative reports, the cost can be further spread. The essential point is that the equipment required by the research staff can

shared by other operations and thus its cost can be spread. The local possibilities should be explored with a company supplying such equipment.

This consultant urges the importance of providing research and evaluation service within the Leflore County schools at the earliest possible date and expanding it as rapidly as funds and personnel can be made available.